Clean Air

LOS ANGELES AREA ON PATH TO CLEAN AIR

Sheds "Smoggiest" Title For Second Straight Year

On March 20, 2000, EPA gave final approval to the Los Angeles metropolitan area's revised clean air plan, already in effect, which sets out a detailed road map for pollution reductions needed to attain the national health standard for ozone (smog) by 2010.

The revised plan was the product of cooperative efforts by the California Air Resources Board, the South Coast Air Quality Management District, three environmental groups, and EPA. With EPA acting as mediator, these parties ended 25 years of litigation when they agreed on the final plan. The agreement allows the air district the flexibility to approve newly-emerging anti-pollution technologies.

Thanks to the new plan and its predecessors over the past four decades, smog fighters at the South Coast AQMD were happy to report in November 2000 that for the second straight year, the Los Angeles area was no longer the nation's smoggiest (Houston was again #1).

Nevertheless, the L.A. area still suffered 40 days with unhealthy ozone levels last year. This ground-level ozone, the main component of smog, contributes to respiratory problems, asthma attacks, damage to immune systems, hospital admissions and lost work days, and even premature death—cumulative impacts costing billions of dollars each year.

The **new South Coast clean air plan will reduce air pollutants by more than 80 tons per day,** primarily through advanced controls on the manufacture and use of paints and solvents, and state-of-the-art pollution controls on industrial emissions. Coupled with new, more stringent state and federal limits on motor vehicle exhaust, these measures are designed to meet the 2010 clean air deadline set by Congress, even with continued economic and population growth. The benefits of this environmental progress extend throughout Southern California, since air pollution from the L.A. area contributes to health problems from the Mexican border to Santa Barbara.

EPA WORKS COOPERATIVELY WITH STATE, LOCAL AIR AGENCIES

◆ A $115,000 EPA grant to the Association of (San Francisco) Bay Area Governments (ABAG) and a $100,000 EPA grant to the Bay Area Air Quality Management District supported **monitoring of dioxin levels** in the air and efforts to **prevent dioxin emissions** from fuel and waste combustion. Dioxins, a group of highly toxic, persistent, bioaccumulative compounds, are present at extremely low levels in the environment, but can build up to toxic levels when they are taken up by plants and animals and move up the food chain.

◆ EPA and the state of California worked with **El Dorado County** (east of Sacramento) to develop a coordinated approach to local asbestos issues. Asbestos is abundant there in naturally-occurring serpentine rock, and in some instances has been used as gravel on roads, which creates asbestos dust every time a vehicle travels these roads. EPA and the state also took **enforcement actions against rock crushing quarries that emit asbestos-laden dust.**

◆ EPA helped the states of **Arizona, California and Nevada** complete statewide **prescribed burning regulations** and policies. Prescribed burning to reduce fuel loads is often necessary in western forests to reduce the risk of disastrous wildfires, but weather conditions and timing are key to reducing health hazards from smoke.

◆ EPA worked with the city of **San Francisco** to publicize alternatives to conventional dry cleaning, which releases toxic chemicals into the air. EPA has also provided training and technical assistance to dry cleaners who want to switch to **non-toxic wet-cleaning** processes.

*Fifteen wet-cleaning businesses in the San Francisco Bay Area can be found at **www.1800CLEANUP.org***

CHEVRON SETTLEMENT CUTS REFINERY POLLUTION

On Aug. 23, 2000, Chevron U.S.A. Inc. agreed to pay a record $7 million to settle claims that it violated clean air regulations at its offshore loading terminal near El Segundo, California. The settlement includes a $6 million penalty, the highest ever paid under the federal Clean Air Act for a single facility, and environmental projects valued at $1 million.

These projects require **Chevron** to pay $500,000 to help **build and operate a health clinic in Wilmington, California,** to diagnose and treat respiratory diseases. Chevron also agreed to spend $500,000 to install leakless valves and double-sealed pumps at its El Segundo refinery. These devices reduce refineries' air emissions significantly.

Felicia Marcus, EPA's Pacific Southwest regional administrator from 1993 through 2000, characterized the settlement as ". . . [A] big victory . . . more than just a penalty. It tells facilities not to shortchange people on clean air, and gives residents the health care they need."

The case began in 1997, when the nonprofit Communities for a Better Environment sued Chevron, alleging that smog-forming vapors known as volatile organic compounds were escaping into the air while petroleum products were pumped into

CHRISTY SHAKE

*Oil refineries must carefully monitor their valves, pumps, tanks, and pipelines to prevent leaks of smog-forming gases. **Previous page:** Downtown Los Angeles on a clear day, which is increasingly typical. Photo Courtesy South Coast Air Quality Management District.*

tanker ships from the Chevron refinery. EPA reviewed the evidence, found it credible, and in November 1999 sued Chevron, alleging the same violations.

CLEAN AIR NEWS

Real-time Ozone Mapping Now on Internet: Last year EPA expanded its Ozone Mapping Project, designed to provide access to current smog conditions, to cover all major metropolitan areas with ozone problems in the Pacific Southwest. The Project's Web site at ***www.epa.gov/airnow***, displays air pollution forecasts, health information, and real-time ozone maps during the annual smog season, which runs from May through October. The site gives people in the most populated areas information they need protect their health—which can be critical for those suffering from respiratory diseases.

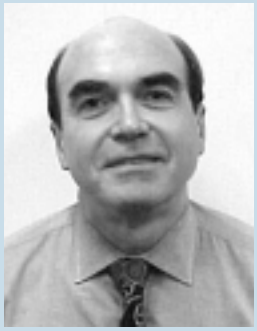
Phoenix Meets Ozone, CO Standards; Dust/Soot Plan OK'd: On May 19, 2000, EPA announced its preliminary finding that the Phoenix metropolitan area **attained the national health standard for ozone (smog)** for the third straight year. Also for the third straight year, Phoenix achieved the national health standard for **carbon monoxide** (CO). An odorless, colorless gas which can be deadly at high concentrations, CO reduces the human body's ability to deliver vital oxygen to organs and tissues.

In April 2000, EPA had given preliminary approval of a local plan to address **particulate (dust and soot)** pollution. These particles, much smaller in diameter than a human hair, can aggravate asthma and cause severe respiratory illness, or even death. At the same time, EPA withdrew federal sanctions (for lack of a workable plan) that had gone into effect a month earlier.

Clean Air Gains in Santa Barbara and San Diego: On June 23, 2000, EPA approved Santa Barbara's successful plan to attain the national health standard for ozone, which that area had achieved by a 1999 deadline. On September 8, EPA approved a one-year extension of the San Diego area's ozone deadline.

This area had ranked 9th-worst in the nation in number of days with unhealthy smog in 1995-1997. However, despite rapid population growth, San Diego met the clean air standard for ozone in 1999 and 2000, making the area eligible for extensions of its 1999 deadline to achieve three straight clean air years.

David P. Howekamp Retires As EPA Regional Air Chief



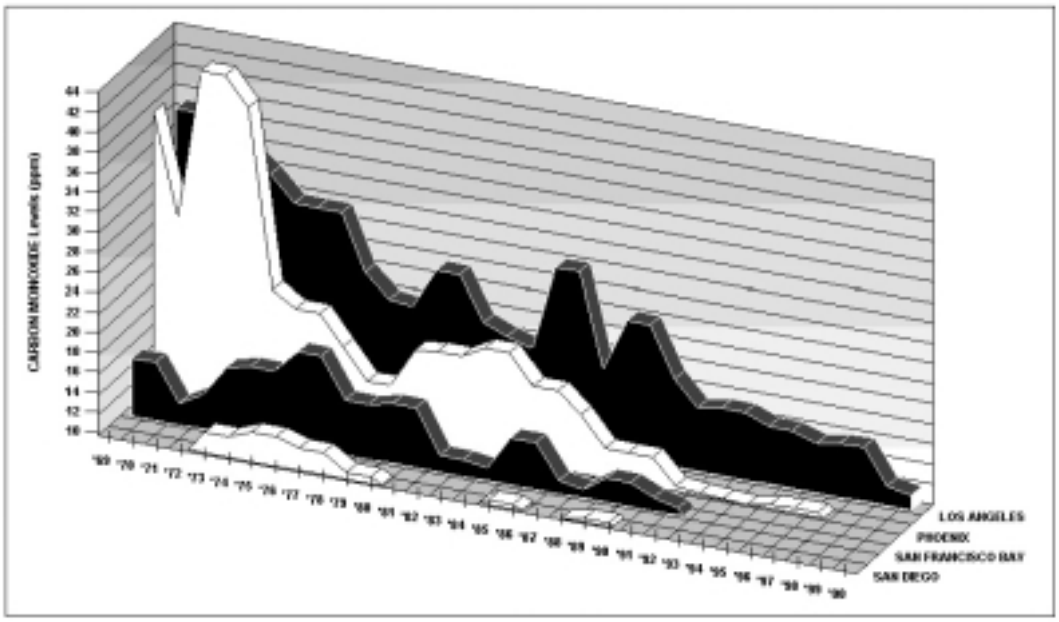
MARTY ROBIN

As director of EPA's Pacific Southwest Air Division from 1982 until his retirement in 2000, David P. (better known as "Dave") Howekamp was in charge of federal clean air programs in Arizona, California, Hawaii, Nevada and the Pacific Island territories. During his tenure EPA's regional Air Division built extraordinary cooperative relationships among governmental agencies, environmental groups, and the business community. Under Howekamp's leadership, the Air Division gained a reputation for innovation in clean air policy and technology.

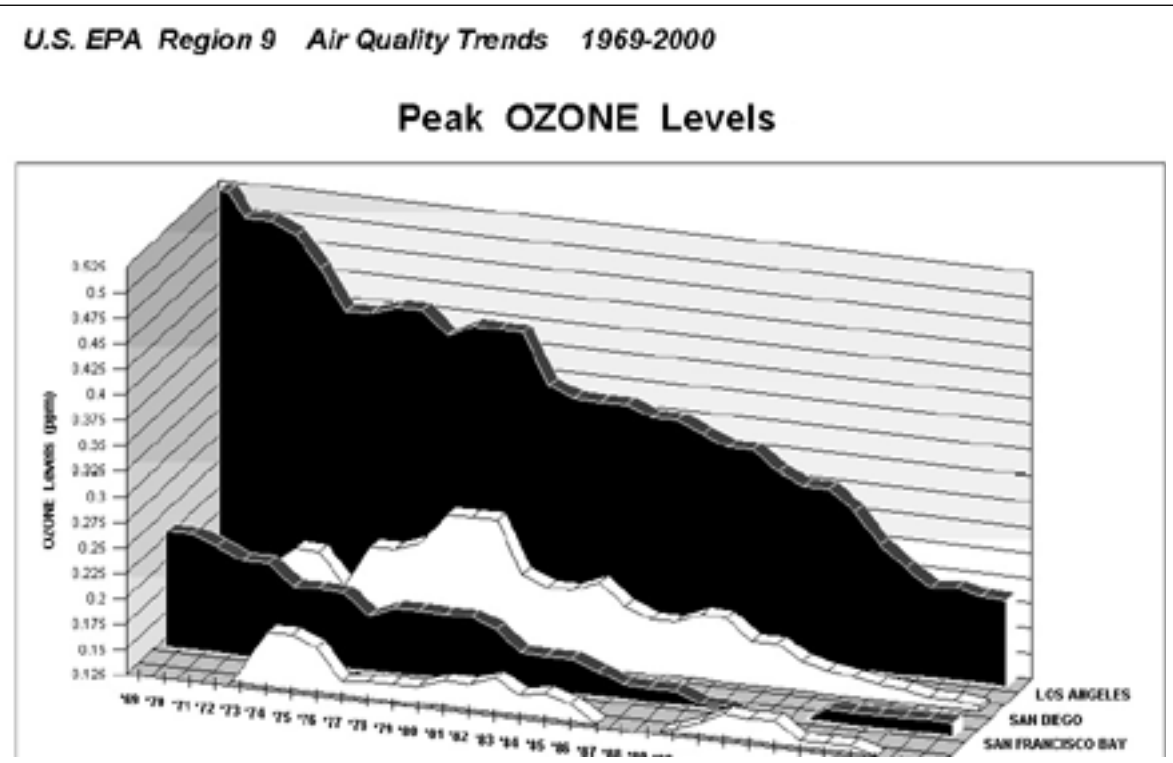
Howekamp supervised the regional Air Division's enforcement actions against more than eighty air-polluting facilities during the last ten years – a period when air pollution in the Region declined by many hundreds of tons each year. On the policy side, the regional Air Division recycled many of the cost-effective clean air measures in the Los Angeles area's early 1990's EPA-approved clean air plan, to benefit air quality throughout California. These programs would form the basis for California's 1994 statewide clean air plans, the most successful ever produced under the federal Clean Air Act. This strategy reduced emissions and improved air quality dramatically, particularly in Southern California, in 1995-2000.

In March 2001, EPA announced Howekamp's successor: Jack Broadbent, formerly deputy executive officer of California's South Coast Air Quality Management District. Broadbent took office as EPA's regional Air Division director in April 2001.

To find out more about the EPA's clean air programs in the Pacific Southwest Region, contact the Air Division at (415)744-1219, or r9.info@epa.gov



Graph illustrates decline in carbon monoxide pollution levels since 1969. Points on graph represent second-highest levels in each preceding two year period.



Graph illustrates dramatic smog reductions since the 1970s. Points on graph represent fourth highest ozone levels reached during the preceding three years.

Carbon monoxide and ozone (smog) levels have dropped dramatically since the 1970s, benefiting over 25 million people who live (and breathe) in these metropolitan areas.

JIM GROVE

EPA is working with the Western Regional Air Partnership to reduce sulphur dioxide emissions from industry, thus reducing haze and restoring desert vistas in the Grand Canyon and nearby Havasupai Indian lands.

The chart on page 12 shows the dramatic progress toward clean air that has been made in the biggest urban areas of the Pacific Southwest region since 1969.

New Power Plant Permit Offsets Pollution: In Summer 2000, EPA backed an innovative clean air permit for the Otay Mesa Power Plant, located in the San Diego Air Pollution Control District. The permit gives the new power plant credit for air pollution reductions from ships and motor vehicles, to offset its own emissions. This action has been cited as a model for accommodating new industrial facilities without sacrificing clean air.

Cleaner Western Skies: EPA worked with 10 states and 10 Indian tribes in the Western Regional Air Partnership (WRAP) to develop recommendations for reducing sulfur dioxide emissions from industrial smokestacks in the western U.S. over the next 20 years. In 2001, EPA will incorporate these recommendations into an existing regulation to reduce haze in the southwestern states.

New Industry Permits in Indian Country: During the year 2000, EPA issued 13 industry permits designed **to control major sources of air pollution on Indian land,** principally on the Navajo Nation. The industries include natural gas compressor stations, electric power plants, landfills, oil and gas wellfields and coal mines. Under the permits, these facilities must monitor their operations to show that they are complying with the Clean Air Act. They also must pay fees proportional to their air emissions, which gives them an incentive to pollute less.

EPA Intervenes in Burning Issue at Sierra Army Depot: For years, northern Nevada residents raised objections to the Army's ongoing disposal of munitions by detonating and burning them in the open air at the **Sierra Army Depot near Herlong, California.** Prevailing

DAVID D. SCHMIDT

North America's Great Basin has long been famous for clear skies and stunning vistas. This mountain range is in Great Basin National Park in eastern Nevada.

winds usually carry the resulting smoke eastward into Nevada. But California's Lassen County Air Pollution Control District, which wrote the Depot's open burning/detonation permit, took no action. In 2000, EPA intervened, ruling that the permit must be modified to require that the Depot comply with the Clean Air Act. The revised permit is expected to limit open burning/detonation at the Depot.

AIR ENFORCEMENT ACTIONS CUT POLLUTION

Many of EPA's major Clean Air Act enforcement actions in 2000 emphasized requiring violators to prevent pollution, not just pay penalties. Some examples:

- The **Timet** titanium ingot-producing plant in **Henderson, Nevada,** violated its permit requirements, emitting up to 360 additional tons per year of sulfur dioxide, a prime contributor to regional haze. Under a settlement with EPA, Timet will install pollution controls and pay a penalty of $430,000.

- To settle a joint EPA/State of Hawaii enforcement action, the **Tesoro oil refinery on Oahu** agreed to modify its sulfur recovery units to avoid unplanned shutdowns and prevent excess sulfur dioxide air emissions. The company also agreed to donate $50,000 to Honolulu to help pay for a hazardous materials emergency response vehicle for the area near its industrial park. Tesoro also paid a $681,780 penalty.

- To settle numerous violations of the Clean Air Act, Clean Water Act and hazardous waste regulations during the 1990s, the **California Office of State Printing** agreed to meet interim air emission limits, obtain proper air pollution control permits, and stop using inks high in volatile organic compounds, a major smog source in the Sacramento area. The facility also paid a penalty of $320,500.